Historia Naturalis Dissected

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/42244599.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	Gen
Fandom:	Hannibal (TV)
Characters:	Beverly Katz, Jimmy Price, Brian Zeller, Hannibal Lecter, Will Graham, Jack Crawford, Alana Bloom
Additional Tags:	Team Sassy Science (Hannibal), Reaction, mentions of past violence, Mentions of past abuse, Unrequited Crush, future hannigram, Crack Treated Seriously
Language:	English
Series:	Part 3 of Evil has no roots. But humans love to dig.
Stats:	Published: 2022-10-08 Words: 10,386 Chapters: 1/1

Historia Naturalis Dissected

by CestPasDuBaudelaire

Summary

Beverly Katz, Jimmy Price and Brian Zeller find themselves at the opening event of an exhibition dedicated to the art of that strange European Doctor that they can sometimes see in Jack's office.
An occasion for them to stroll and bitch, as they pick up on and misread the hints of tragedy and monstrosity sprinkled throughout Lecter's drawings.

Notes

Salut les gens !

I've been working on some audacious and time-consuming work for a while now, and I'm about to dive into more of that, but I wanted to get back to that series again, before commiting myself fully to something else.
I love the trope "side character learns about main character's past" so much and I can't help it, I want to write again and again about it! Even if I have nothing new to say, still want to do it all over again. So happy to be able to post a new installment!
So, I had this idea yesterday and I worked on it for a day, as I don't have much free time currently. Still, I hope there's some good stuff here.

Though it is part of a series, the OSs don't happen in the same "universe", and they can be read independently and in any order. However, the headcanon I use in that fic is the one I explore at length in the first installment.

Compared to the other two, this one is very lighthearted, we're bordering crack fic treated seriously. So the following warnings are for the subtext and the references only: child abuse, murder, incestuous feelings.
Still rated it G because it's really not in the main text.

Anyway, without further due, I'll leave you to it!

See the end of the work for more notes

HISTORIA NATURALIS DISSECTED

by CestPasDuBaudelaire

Jack Crawford never left early.

It was a fact that was well known by the whole department.

Jack was the first to arrive and the last to leave. He had crimes to prevent and innocent lives to save and the weight of his tasks shone through his schedule. For new members aching for recognition, Jack was a milestone to reach and brag about. It wasn't rare for them to casually mention to their higher ups that, while working unpaid overtime - out of sheer passion for their job and nothing else –, they had met Jack leaving his office or walking to his car. It was such a shared knowledge that it had even become a saying among the older agents. When work was piling up and they knew they would have to pay for it with their evening, they would often say ‘I think I'm gonna hold the door for Jack tonight’ and everyone would know what it meant and would meet that idiom with empathy and an offered cup of strong coffee.

The solid foundations of that knowledge, burrowed deep into the truth of years of experienced work life, were such a corner stone of the department folklore, that, this afternoon, when Beverly Katz saw Jack gather his stuff in his office, ready to leave, she had to go through a short period of denial before facing the fact.

The undeniable fact.

Jack was leaving early.

"Guys? Does Jack have a hearing or something?"

Jimmy and Brian, like her, had spent the last few hours filling up papers and writing reports for the dirty pleasure of some unknown pencil pushers from the higher floors. Well,

Brian had spent the last few hours doing that. Jimmy had simply complained about the idea of doing it, filling only the background sound rather than any piece of administrative paper.

In any case, both men took their eyes away from their work or lack of to look up at the glass wall of their boss' office to see Jack picking up his wallet and slipping it in the inside pocket of his suit.

"Not that I am aware of," Brian frowned. "A hearing about what? Things've been pretty calm lately."

"Maybe he just has a meeting with the big boss," Jimmy offered.

"Yeah, and that's why he took his car keys with him. So that he can drive up the third floor."

"I didn't notice he picked up his keys, okay?"

"Good thing you're not working on investigations, then. Oh wait, you are."

"No but seriously," Bev interrupted their bickering without a glance for any of them, "where is he going?"

"I hope it's not about his wife."

Leaving her papers behind, Bev quickly stood up and rushed to the office to catch Jack before he could close the door behind him.

"Something I can do for you, Miss Katz?"

"I was gonna ask the same. Where're you heading?"

"Why the curiosity?"

"Isn't it our job to be curious?"

Jack let out a smile, which meant he was in one of his – currently rare – good moods. As there was nothing left for him to add after that, he simply nodded.

"I guess it is."

"It's just that it's rare to see you leave early, so we were wondering."

"I'm going to an opening event."

"A play?"

"An exhibition, actually."

Though Bev knew Jack to be quite the cultured man – certainly more so than her and the two lovely dumbasses she had for colleagues – she would have never pictured him invested enough in that kind of events to leave work early for them.

"You're going with your wife?" she asked.

Brian didn't dare to mention her to Jack ever since they had learned about her illness, he didn't want to trigger any painful feelings or latent fear. Jimmy had been left in the complete dark so as to prevent him from making a fool of himself as he could so skillfully do every single time. But Beverly never shied away from the topic. Jack still had a wife, and she was happy for them if they got to spend some time together.

"No, actually, I am going with Doctor Alana Bloom."

That had been unexpected to say the least, and Beverly found herself at a loss.

"Doctor Bloom? You two... You two are going to an opening event together?"

"Nothing to worry about, Katz," Jack reassured, amused by his agent's confusion, "we will go there to support a colleague."

"A colleague?"

"And a friend. Doctor Lecter is the one being exposed. He didn't explicitly invite us, but we both wanted to have a look still and we figured nothing was preventing us from doing just that."

"Oh! I see! So no threatening urgency?"

"No. Why would you suspect that?"

"I don't know. You leaving this building before Jimmy... There's something apocalyptic about it..."

Jack laughed it off, putting his coat on and dropping his keys in his pocket.

"Nothing of that sort, Miss Katz. Nothing at all. That being said, I must go if I don’t want to keep Doctor Bloom waiting. Have a good day and I'll see you tomorrow."

"See you."

Now armed with the power of knowledge, Beverly went back to her colleagues who had been impatiently waiting for her to collect the tea she could then come spill with them.

"So? Someone's dying?" Jimmy asked.

"No. He's going to an opening event."

"Opening of what?" Brian frowned, as surprised as Beverly had first been while hearing the news.

"An exhibition. Apparently, Doctor Lecter's. That's what he said."

"Doctor Lecter?" Jimmy repeated. "Why haven't we been invited?"

The three of them barely knew Hannibal Lecter. They had seen him a couple of times, and exchanged with him a few words while the visitor had been waiting for Jack or Alana, but nothing more than conventional courtesy required of them.

Yet, it had been enough for the European Doctor to make quite the first impression on Jimmy.

"Well, we aren't his friend," Brian rightfully pointed out.

"And how are we supposed to become his friends if we're not invited to his events?"

"I'm pretty sure that's the other way around," Bev shrugged.

"I disagree," Jimmy firmly stated. “First the eccentric art exhibit, then the small talk at the coffee machine. In that order and no other.”

"You really should get over it," Brian advised, addressing the underlying reason for Jimmy’s enthusiasm. "Your crush on him won't lead you anywhere."

"Firstly, I don't have a crush on him. I have a crush on his money and his wardrobe. Secondly, why wouldn't it lead me somewhere? You have so little faith in me. Always belittling my abilities. That's a toxic work environment. I'm calling it. You're toxic, Brian."

"It has nothing to do with you... I mean, it would have a *lot* to do with you, if it could actually even reach you. It can't. The guy's straight."

"Please," Jimmy rolled his eyes, "the other day, he was wearing a cyan suit. A cyan suit! The guy was the literal definition of flamboyant."

Beverly wasn't sure she disagreed with that last statement. On the other hand, what she was sure of, was that Jimmy Price was not to Lecter's taste, whatever those tastes were. It could be told from the flat and sober cordiality Lecter had displayed the few times the eccentric team had tried to force conversations on him. The guy wasn't too fond of them and their familiarity and he seemed to prefer his own company over theirs.

"So? We're going or not?" Jimmy asked, interrupting her thoughts.

"Going where?" she asked.

"To the exhibition of course!"

"Why would we?" Brian sighed, exasperated. "We don't know the guy."

"With that attitude, we won't ever!"

"But I don't want to know the guy!" Bryan insisted. "He is weird, and snobby."

"He's not weird, he is European," Jimmy argued.

"That's even worse."

"Fine. Be your broody, uncultured, uninterested basic american self. Bev'? You're going?"

"Are you making me choose between an exhibition by your flaming crush that will most likely end with your very public humiliation or two more hours of paper scratching?"

Jimmy's smile spread twice as large as his mouth should have been able to manage.

"I knew you'd be in. You're a friend, Bev!"

He extended his hand and Beverly high-fived him before standing up and picking up her coat.

"Wait!" Brian tried to interrupt them before they could walk away. "You're leaving me with all the work? You're being serious right now?"

"That's what broody unhelpful coworkers get."

"Fuck it, I'm coming too if you're gonna be like that!"

They all grabbed their coats and bags and rushed downstairs in the hope of catching up with Jack before he could exit the parking lot.

They thankfully found him in the lobby, in the middle of a conversation with Alana Bloom.

"I think I've got everything," she was saying. "We can go."

"Jack!" Jimmy screamed from across the large, open room. "Wait for us!"

Jack turned around to watch them all run down the stairs toward him.

"What do you want?" Jack asked, jumping right to suspicion. "Something came up?"

"No kidding, something came up!" Jimmy exclaimed, out of breath already. "Art, with a capital A. That’s what came up. Why didn't you tell us?"

"I didn't know you would be interested."

"Not interested?" he said with a vexed outrage. “I adore Arts. Art is sexy, Jack. Everything artsy, I'm really into it! Wherever there's art, ta-da, your Jimmy boy's here and willing!"

"It's an exhibition about naturalist illustrations in medicine."

"Fas. Ci. Na. Ting!" Jimmy exclaimed. "Those are the best! I'm so into nature! Trees, flowers, mushrooms..."

"In medicine."

"Medicinal mushrooms. The best kind of mushrooms!"

Bloom and Jack detailed Jimmy, both of them equally unimpressed and unfooled, creating a ridiculous contrast with Jimmy's over the top enthusiasm.

Ultimately, Jack sighed:

"Do you want to come?"

"You're inviting us? Then sure, of course, we wouldn't miss it for the world!"

Jack rolled his eyes, knowing Price enough to know that, whatever it was, it was certainly not about Natural History, but he didn't bother. Years of experience had taught him that trying to guess Jimmy's logic was never a bright idea. He therefore simply turned around to walk to the parking lot.

Bev, Jimmy and Brian didn't waste a second to follow him, along with Alana.

"Where is it?" Bev asked.

"Baltimore," Bloom answered. "John Hopkins University is hosting the event."

"Nice," Brian mumbled, probably thinking about the long road ahead of them.

"And what is it about, exactly?"

"It's an exhibition that mostly targets the students. As I said, it's about naturalist illustrators. There is a major shortage of them currently, and they can't replace the ageing ones. John Hopkins wants to educate its students about the major role of illustrators in the history of medicine. Show them the most important of them and maybe create a few vocations among the new generation."

Beverly didn't know how scientific drawings of 'trees, flowers and mushrooms' like Jimmy had put it, could be interesting in the slightest but she wasn't there for the art, only for the gossip. And she was certain she would find something worthy of her time there.

"We're gonna follow you," she said to Jack and Bloom, while showing her own car keys.

"You can hop in mine, if you want," Jack answered, “enough space for us all to squeeze in if we have to.”

"No, that's fine, I don't mind. And if you want to spend some time with your friends afterward, we may want to be able to get back on our own."

"Probably for the best."

Jimmy and Brian followed her to her car. They didn't even waste a word on debating who should take the wheel. They were two awful drivers, for very different reasons, and they were both thankfully aware of that fact.

"How far away?" Brian asked.

"Baltimore? 'Bout two and a half hours."

"Wonderful..."

"If you’re here to bring that kind of energy, it really wasn’t necessary to come at all!" Jimmy lectured.

As they got closer to the car however, Brian pushed Jimmy away from the door of the passenger seat.

"No way you're riding with the grown-ups.”

"I'm grown up."

"Neither in size nor in maturity."

"I'm older than you."

"Yeah! I know! Sucks to be you."

That settled the tone for the whole drive. Two hours and a half were nothing for Jimmy and Brian who had years of training in how to ignite each other's urge to argue and bicker. With her eyes on the road, Beverly was none the less happy to arbitrate, knowing well how to fuel them both when they were beginning to tire.

So much so that it was only once they had arrived in Baltimore, and Jack's car was beginning to turn more regularly, calling for a greater focus, that they found it in them to talk

about what they were here for.

"We're really gonna have to pretend to care about grass and wood?" Brian sighed.

"I'm here for one kind of wood only."

"I didn't know Lecter was an illustrator," Bev said, ignoring Jimmy's remark altogether. "I thought he was a surgeon."

"He isn't a shrink?"

"Yes. But I mean before that. I knew he reconverted, but I didn't know it was from illustration."

"I don't know the guy's resume. I only know he's working with Graham. And if that can prevent Jack's pet from dropping weird shits all day long, then I'm Lecter's greatest support. Do you guys remember when he said 'he's eating them' in the middle of nothing?"

"Yes!" Jimmy exclaimed. "During the autopsy for the Minnesota Shrike's girl. Said that with a straight face, with his gloomy, moody eyes. Spooky. Not in a bad way, though. Who doesn't like a bit of spook in the autopsy room, am I right?"

As they were entering the campus of the University, Bev slowed down her car, mindful of the careless students crossing the road from each side to go about their evening. The sun had begun to set, and the student city was slowly awakening for its buzzing life after dark.

Jack had slowed down too, and Beverly was tailing him closely, as they were both making their way to a small parking lot normally reserved for the faculty.

As the last classes had ended about half an hour earlier, they didn't struggle to find a place close to the entrance, and they didn't waste much time before joining Jack and Alana Bloom at the doors.

"Behave," Jack wisely yet vainly reminded them before letting them in and guiding them to the place of the event.

It was not a small, cramped, deserted exhibition made for a limited elite and for a short period of time like Beverly had pictured it. It was obvious that John Hopkins had put some means behind it, in terms of money, but also in terms of space and thinking.

It was actually taking ten full rooms, organized around a main, central eleventh one, from which the visitor was entering the exhibition.

The main place was large and unobstructed by the usual panels of display, but, from the glimpses that could be caught of the other rooms, one could see they were more sinuous and packed with artpieces. The whole installation had been thought like a star-like walking path, with a general and breathy main area and ten busy, tortuous points.

The central room, which was the only one Beverly could detail fully, was showing all the tells of a space thought for rich visitors. A table against the wall, embellished with an impeccable white, silver and gold runner, adorned with centerpieces made of flowers and leaves of the same hues, was offering to the guests a variety of petit fours and glasses of champagne organized by size and colors. On the plates, camaieus of pink, green and blue were pleasing the eyes before they could even be tasted. The center of the room had been left free for people to meet and greet, and small groups of expensively dressed and extensively old folks had gathered.

By the entrance, opposite to the table, large black letters painted on the wall were spelling the name of the exhibition.

HISTORIA NATURALIS DISSECTED

A NATURAL HISTORY OF ILLUSTRATION

AND THE NATURALIST ILLUSTRATORS OF HISTORY

Not catchy in the slightest, but every bit what Beverly had envisioned, if nothing else.

Opposite to the main doors were the ten accesses to the other rooms. They were all on the same semi-circular portion of wall and, in-between each of them, drawings and paintings had been hung on the wall, each enlightened by its private soft lamp, and protected by either a golden frame or a glass pane.

"Here he is," Bloom said, pointing at someone in the crowd.

Both Jack and she walked toward the man they had recognized, and Beverly and her two colleagues followed closely.

"You're driving us back, right?" Brian asked while grabbing a glass of champagne from a passing tray.

"Depends on my mood," she shrugged.

They all arrived to a small group, which was discussing at the center of the room, and one of its members – Beverly recognized Lecter from the lavender suit before he even turned around – politely excused himself before walking toward them.

"You really shouldn't have driven so far," Lecter greeted Jack and Bloom with a pleasant smile despite the disapproving tone of his remark.

"I can't believe you'd hide it from me!" Bloom exclaimed, playfully reproachful.

"Nothing was hidden," Lecter argued. "It was simply not worth promoting. This exhibition is more about History than art itself."

"Still! I want to see your oeuvres."

"If you want to admire them, Alana, you just have to pass by my house when you're in the neighborhood. You know you are always welcome."

He then turned toward Jack.

"Please, tell me you will let me invite you over once we are done here. To make it worth your time and your gas. I'm afraid I must insist."

"It is already worth it, but I will certainly not refuse such an invitation."

After the two men had agreed upon that improvised evening, Lecter turned toward Beverly, Jimmy and Brian.

"I must admit I did not expect to see you here. I am therefore pleased beyond expectations."

"We wanted to show support and appreciation for art," Jimmy said with a high voice and a weird smile that he certainly thought to be deviously charming though Bev deemed it to be more worrying than anything else.

"What is it exactly about?" Jack asked. "Alana told me it was about naturalist art?"

"It is actually more about naturalist artists," Lecter explained, his eyes detailing the entrances to the other parts of the exhibition. "I think they should have made it a bit clearer. They wanted to highlight the work of the ten most prominent names of biological illustration in medicine. Each room is devoted to one of them, and shows their art from its earliest hour to its last. Most of it is actually not about biology at all. It is not so much about promoting naturalism in medicine as it is about proving students that illustrators can get recognition. Eventually."

His face was unreadable, but his words made it sound like it was barely more than a shiny lie.

"Why are you here, if you're so critical of it?" Bev asked him.

"I am not against it. It is a prestigious exhibition, and I am honored to be a part of it. Most importantly, it is a very needed action. I am the youngest artist featured today and there are only two of us still alive. Sadly, it is quite representative of the reality behind. A reality that doesn’t get any younger. We need to inspire the scientists that will replace me."

"You're not yet into the grave, Doctor," Jimmy said. "You still have some years ahead of you. And some fun to have."

Brian wasn't so far from facepalming himself – or facepalming Jimmy maybe – but Lecter didn't blink an eye.

"I have no problem acknowledging my own mortality. And therefore, I have at heart to pave the way for what will come after me. Illustration is an important part of research and history, and it is well worth a small white lie of recognition."

"You're not recognized?" Beverly asked.

"I am acknowledged enough to be featured in an exhibition about the most important illustrators of modern history, yet none of my drawings ever brought me the recognition and the money a single article in World Psychiatry can grant me. I am in it for the noble aim, but I don't mind tricking other skilled souls into following the same path. In science as in nature, cruelty has its perks. In naturalist science, it is the key to survival."

He smiled at that thought and Jack brought his glass up to turn it into a toast.

"To righteous cruelty and to well deserved recognition," he said. "Congratulations, Hannibal."

"Thank you, Jack."

Bloom joined the toast, and Beverly, Jimmy and Brian followed her awkwardly, not knowing Lecter enough for their word not to sound awfully shallow.

"I guess we will visit the exhibition now," Bloom said.

"Help yourself. I would recommend you to start with Max Brödel. A most insightful stroll among his oeuvres awaits you. But be careful, those walks are meant to take you into the depths of the artist's soul. Who knows what lay there?"

"What about your soul, Doctor?" Jimmy asked.

"Mines comes far later. I am not quite old enough to precede Brödel in your visit."

"I like to beat expectations," Jimmy said before walking away for what he certainly thought to be a resonating exit.

Beverly and Brian, as the good friends that they were, smiled awkwardly one last time before following their colleague.

"The hell if I'll visit some boring dead doodler."

"Nah," Bev nodded, "you wanna visit the boring living doodler."

"As a matter of fact, I do. Very much."

They spotted at once the entrance to the gallery dedicated to Lecter's arts, and they walked toward it.

"Eh, doesn't that remind you of something?"

From the corner of her eyes, Beverly had spotted a large drawing, two feet by three, showing a perfect replica of the raw intertwined muscles of the neck. The endless list of names underneath, the thin, cursive writing, the perfectly useless yet impressive precision of the muscle fibers... Beverly knew that drawing. She had spent hours studying it, pulling an all-nighter on that chart only to fail her exam the very next day. She had a heated memory of that specific depiction.

"Yeah," Brian nodded, "I know it! It was in my anatomy textbook."

Beverly looked around, at the other drawings exposed in the main room. The inside of a heart, the facial bones, the circulatory and nervous system of the hand, the pulmonary circulation of a front cut lung, those were all drawings Beverly knew, some of them still by heart.

"Gosh," Brian exclaimed, having the exact same memories as Bev, "talk about one hell of a throwback. I feel like we're back in the Anatomy Lab and that I can smell Professor Richardson's morning breath..."

"My, the nights I sacrificed to these drawings."

It was Bloom who had said that, as she had sneaked on them, causing Jimmy to jump out of his skin.

"That's why I chose him as my PhD mentor," she said pensively, "but still, these drawings sure made me hate him at times."

"They are all from him?" Brian asked.

"Yes," she nodded, "nearly all the anatomical charts you've seen in your biology books are from him. They don't print books with the old ones anymore, apart from history books, of course."

"All of them?"

"All that are drawings. He has a technique that can match the precision and the clarity of our modern medical imagery, but he is still able to present them in ways computers can't match. So, if it's a drawing, it's most certainly from him, unless you had some very old and outdated books."

Beverly detailed each of the drawings framing the entrance to the part of the exhibition dedicated to Lecter. She had no idea all the charts she had studied were from one person alone, let alone someone alive that she knew. She had never questioned who could be behind them. Now, she was understanding a bit better what Lecter was saying about recognition. He was more known for being a good psychiatrist among many others than for being the main reference of all the anatomy books forming the new generation of Doctors in medicine and in biology.

"What does anatomy have to do with Psychiatry?" Beverly asked.

"It has a bit to do," Bloom answered. "But he is mostly known for having been a surgeon."

"Yes, but you're a psychiatrist. How did his work in anatomy influence your choice for your mentor?"

"I was in it for the prestige. When he was still working at John Hopkins, he was very highly regarded as a jack of all trades, master of just as many. He could sometimes even mentor those outside of his specialties. I really simply wanted his name on my front page."

"Relatable," Jimmy nodded, "I'd have done the same."

Bloom smiled at the memory and, after one last look at the drawing that had cost them all many hours of their life, she walked away.

"You're not going in?" Brian asked.

"I will follow Hannibal's advice and visit it in order. We will cross each other's path eventually."

She left and Brian, Jimmy and Bev were once again alone in front of the entrance of the new room.

"Let's dive in," Bev said.

"Yes!" Jimmy agreed. "Let's!"

The new room was very different from the former one. It wasn't large and welcoming. White panels had been organized around the place to create ephemeral walls, the space

between them only large enough to accommodate small groups. It was forming a clear path that the visitor had to follow from its beginning to its end. And Beverly quickly understood that the stroll would show them the entire artistic life of Doctor Hannibal Lecter, because the oeuvres by the entrance were nothing more than child drawings.

"That's one early start of a career," Brian pointed out.

And career it was, as there was nothing amateurish about the drawings. Though the information tag was stating the pieces had all been created before the artist's ten years of age, it was not something a child could do. The precision of the shapes, the motion of the subjects, the exigence of the details, Bev didn't know much about art, but she knew that kind of things was good. For a professional adult. To think that a not-even-ten years old had been the one holding the color pencils was simply too difficult for her to wrap her head around.

Most themes were recurrent, however. As if the child had yet to see much of the world, and didn't have enough imagination to guess what was not everyday under his very eyes. The silhouette of a castle was often looming over the horizon, high towers creating long shadows on the floor. Two characters were often depicted, a tall man with a carefully trimmed moustache, barely hiding a warm smile, always dressed in an impeccable suit and a woman, just as tall, with long, floating dark hair and bright eyes. Never one of them was depicted without the other.

"Mmh... I see here a strong parental unit. The presence of the castle in the background could however betray a need for protection that could find its root in a fear of change and alterity."

Bev and Brian frowned, staring at Jimmy who was cleverly stroking his chin, a grave air of his face. He held it for a full second before a large smile betrayed his lack of seriousness.

"I'm trying to work on an opinion that could interest a shrink. How was it?"

"Very un-you. So not that bad."

"Thank you, Brian."

"It wasn't a compliment."

"Mockery is your love language. So, it moves me."

Other figures were coming back from drawing to drawing: large black swans on the shore of a pond, yoyos flying through the air, horses running free, or even books appearing as a subtle leitmotiv throughout the different scenes.

The colors also were particularly noticeable. Unlike the drawing itself that was of a geometrical precision, the colors were more anarchic and unrealistic. As if Lecter had been rigorous with the shape and passionate with its filling. They all had clear tendencies, that the people behind the exhibition had separated in four categories: icy blue, luxuriant green, burnt yellow and vibrant red. There was no explanation on the information tags but, judging from the trees and outside landscapes she could see, Beverly could guess it had to do with seasons. And how a general ambiance had appeared to be everything there was to the world for a young and inexperienced Lecter.

Only two drawings were noticeably different from the others. The first one was what appeared to be a church window, with its vivid stained-glass. The drawing also showed the part of the wall that carried it and the stone ground underneath upon which the colors of the window were reflected upside down. The most impressive part of the drawing was between the glass and the stone, where the striking colors of the Christic imagery were creating irised arcs of light between the particles of dust in suspension. The rest of the canvas was of a steady grey, only nuanced by the shadows and the relief of the stone, which forced the eyes to stay solely focused on the spectacle of light in the middle. It had been put in the red category but Beverly could tell it was a work on its own.

The second one which stood out was in the blue category but just as unfitting.

It was mostly black, a darkness too suffocating to be from a natural night, and more easily pictured in a doorless, windowless room. In the middle however, perfectly white on that black canvas, two chubby baby hands opened to form a cup. From them, a cloud of tiny white spots was flying off, like minuscule fireflies finally freed, their light unable to pierce through the darkness.

All the drawings, including the seasonal ones, had one thing in common, Beverly thought. Young Lecter seemed to have been obsessed with light.

"Can we move?" Brian asked. "We're not gonna spend ten minutes in front of each drawing."

"I agree," Jimmy nodded. "Let's move on."

Though he had been the one dragging them here, Jimmy was certainly not here for the art and they all continued their walk to the next section.

The new drawings were nearly the exact opposite of the early ones, to a shocking extent and answering a binary Manicheism.

No more light, no more colors. No more seasonal fantasy, and no more impulsive colors filling reasonable shapes.

Lecter's work, from thirteen to seventeen, was but hues of grey.

An exploration of shadows.

If there had been recurrent patterns in the early drawings, here it had worsened to the point of obsession. It was mostly the same few ideas repeated over and over across different techniques of pencil, charcoal and ink. The most prominent one was a hand. A chubby baby hand with a bracelet around the wrist. It was the same hand in every drawing, and it was also the one that had held the fireflies. Sometimes it was holding a teddy bear, sometimes an adult hand, sometimes also it was splashing water or reaching for strands of hair. But some other times, it was gripping a fabric or scratching a floor.

Beverly couldn't help but feel a vivid feeling of uneasiness inflate her chest, preventing her from enjoying Jimmy's joke about hand fetish. There was something about that chubby, clumsy baby hand that was making it hard for her to breathe. It reminded her of other, well-known imageries. Other children’s hands showed gripping fabrics or scratching floors, as a way to evoke a harsher, unseeable reality. Sensing that this unsettling pictorial obsession was slowly creeping into her mind and would keep her awake well into the night, she forced herself to look at other drawings.

The other recurring patterns were a cabin in a blizzard, and wolves walking in circles, yet Beverly found them to be incredibly less threatening than that damn baby hand.

There were other drawings added into the mix, lightening the otherwise repetitive influences.

"God... Lecter had an edgy teenage phase!"

Beverly looked at the drawings Brian was pointing out. Certainly among the first anatomical charts of the guy, before he had learned how to make them clean and academic. Though the technique itself was perfect – at least from Beverly’s perspective – and a masterpiece of precision, the choice of subject was more debatable. A skinned head revealing raw facial muscles with bulging eyes; the inside of a mouth opened so wide it seemed cut in half; accurate representation of the several rows of adult teeth encased in baby's jaws, a pig's heart inside a human opened torso... There were all depictions of very veracious medical facts, yet the choosing revealed a clear penchant for usually repulsive ideas and aesthetics.

"I'm sure it was his way to be a death-obsessed goth-kid while still being a nerd," Beverly said.

She had been like that herself, drawing human hearts around her crushes' names instead of the dumb symbol that boring normies usually favored. Thinking back on that period of her life, Beverly couldn't help but cringe. It was some sassy owning from Lecter's part to exhibit his dark "not like other boy" phase.

"Jimmy," Brian called, while carefully detailing a drawing of a two headed fœtus skeleton.

"Yes?"

"This guy is into some weird kinks."

"Yes please. I'm very open-minded."

Though she laughed at Jimmy's enthusiastic flippancy, she had bad news to deliver and did so with careful tact.

Because, among the other drawings, there was another series around a same obsession. A woman in all the glory of her breath-taking beauty.

She was depicted, again and again, the same woman caught in different moments. Playing the luth on the perron of a house, asleep in a bathtub, sitting on the shore of a pond, meticulously folding small paper cranes, brushing her hair while sitting at a vanity, lighting up candles on an altar, it was snippets of life that seemed stolen in the moment, not resulting of hours of drawing and shadowing.

"Oh," Jimmy breathed out while detailing the numerous drawings of that woman, "yeah, a muse of his, nothing else."

"Naked?"

It was true that the woman was wearing very little clothing in most of the depictions. It reminded Beverly of these paintings from the fifteenth century in Italy, where most men seemed to just live with only half of their clothes. Yet, Beverly didn't think it was only poetic license at play. There was something in the way the light would fall on the lips, the hair would frame the breasts, the postures would curve the back and display the bottom. Something interested. It was art, Beverly didn't deny that, but it was also too adoring to not reveal deeper fantasies.

"Yes naked," Jimmy refused to admit. "You know nothing of art. Nudity is fine. On canvas, it’s like Prada."

"Face it, Jimmy. He was seventeen, he was horny, and he had a hot neighbor. The guy's straight. I'm sorry, man, but I think you don't have the right body shape for him."

"Michelangelo was as gay as it gets and he still painted women."

"He is not really known for them, though," Beverly kindly pointed out.

"Well, Lecter's not known for drawing women. He is known for skinned cadavers. So your argument doesn't stand and you can both shut it. Let's move on."

They resumed their walk to the next section, ignoring the group of old visitors that were taking this whole thing far too seriously, debating over influences and periods. Beverly found them quite silly, all those overthinking academics, analyzing Lecter's work as if he was some kind of Da Vinci, but on the other hand, she couldn't mock them too much. She really was having her fun exploring the guy's art. Even if not everything seemed bright and shiny and conductive to light-hearted sexual innuendos.

The next section still didn't witness the comeback of colors but it was less suffocating than the former selection. Lecter was between eighteen and twenty-one, according to the information tags, and he was done with his obsessions.

The drawings were not much lighter in their topic, but they were less weird and elusive. They mostly showed scenes of extreme poverty. Taking place in the streets of Baltimore, they seemed to be social yet detached studies on the underbelly of the city. The gatherings around small fires under the bridges; the abandoned buildings turned into seedy crackhouses; volunteers kneeling in front of the despair of humanity; aimless young girls and boys sitting or lying on the concrete, kicking crushed cans around; beggars watching the choosers pass-by. It was nothing like the depictions of homelessness and misery Beverly had seen in the past. It was not working on humanizing its subject, or on denouncing a system. It showed realities while staying outside of them, unbothered. It was nothing more than naturalist illustrations, but of another kind of nature.

All those scenes were telling of Lecter's absence of emotional investment in the suffering in front of him. Beverly had no idea why the guy had suddenly found an interest in human misery, but it was clearly a case of art which couldn't be separated from its artist. Lecter was simply too rich to truly be able to tackle that essential subject. From all that she had seen before, it was the section Beverly was the least impressed by. The technique was getting better and better she guessed, the pieces were less worrying, the frame busier, but they didn't have the warmth of the early pieces nor the fascinating oddity of the teenage works.

It was simply... uninvested.

"Didn't take Lecter for the kind who cares," Brian said, apparently having seen something else than the coldness Beverly had picked up on. "Have you seen the guy's car? It's a Bentley. Not the kind of car Mother Theresa would drive."

"Well, he didn't help the poors, he just drew them," Jimmy pointed.

"How generous of him," Beverly said, already moving on to the next section.

She had noticed the kind of houses that kept on coming back throughout Lecter's childhood work. It was pretty obvious what sort of life he had had. And Bev had no interest in the rich suddenly developing a social conscience by giving a shallow crap about what they would never understand. Beverly was lucky enough to now live a more than decent life, and she had never known the kind of extreme scenes Lecter had drawn, but it still didn't sit right with her. She didn't mind other people's richness as long as it was not coated in hypocrisy.

The next section was also the last, as apparently Lecter had focused his adult years on biological illustrations. No more exploration of style, he had found his own. Beverly could see in the sketches the echo of the charts she had studied. Though, compared to what was in the book, Beverly realized that Lecter had not limited himself to medicine. Flowers were the sole subject of an important part of the artist’s attention. Mushrooms and trees were completing them in nearly equal importance. Still-lives were displaying glimpses of living habits. Birds flying and rabbits hopping were forming bucolic landscapes. A group of old men had gathered around the picture of a half-dissected fish and were philosophizing over the Nietzschean influence of the oeuvre. A larger group were detailing a series of black and white pencil copies of famous Renaissance paintings.

Medicine still had its place, with the largest pieces being several representations of human portraits making all sorts of faces, the series having apparently been titled ‘study on moods’. It was actually the central part of the room, the oeuvres to which the strolling led. Apparently Lecter's most famous work, it was the subject of most of the attention, people detailing with great care the manic or depressed faces. Unwilling to dive into the crowd, Beverly stayed away, looking at the art from afar.

It was her favorite part of that section, the smiling and crying faces, all drawn with the same precision. However, she could spot in them the detachment that had shone through the scenes of Baltimore, and that had inhibited the illustrations Beverly had studied in college. Maybe it was the ‘naturalist’ part. She knew it wasn't simply about nature, it was also about a certain method and scientific rigor. Nearly journalistic work. Illustrators of that exhibition had dedicated their art to History and to the telling of reality. And it wasn't really Beverly's thing.

Yet there was something. Something she had thoroughly enjoyed. Something shining through the drawing of a stupidly talented six years old boy. Something that had survived, in a twisted, darker form for a few years into teenagehood. But something that had been absolutely gone before adulthood. Like blown away. Irremediably lost in a strange abstract tragedy.

Or maybe Bev was just into colors more than into black and white. That was also another possibility.

When they decided they were done, they left the cramped room to go back to the large central area. Their visit had only lasted a dozen minutes, yet Beverly felt exhausted. As if she had just lived a full life, and somehow it was exactly what she had done.

She spotted Lecter at once in the middle of the crowd and there was something strange about watching him in the flesh. The whole room they had just left was all about him, yet he was the big absentee from it, featured nowhere despite the hundred of depictions of the life around him.

She didn't really want to speak with him. Talking to someone about their arts was always an awkward experience and Beverly didn't know Lecter enough to be comfortable with being awkward with him. At least, that was what she was telling herself, because what she truly felt was that she knew Lecter intimately and that they had behind them years of precious shared moments.

However, and no matter her or Brian's opinion on the matter, Jimmy walked to the man with a large smile on his expressive face.

Noticing them, Lecter cordially put an end to his current conversation to meet them halfway.

"It was quite the exhibition, Doctor," Jimmy said before Lecter could ask them anything. "Very enriching. Very."

"I hope it is indeed."

"Your edgy phase? Top tier!"

"I beg your pardon. My what?"

"The scientific oddities," Brian clarified. "The fœtus with two heads and... well… I mostly noticed that one."

"Oh, I see," Hannibal said, slowly understanding what they were talking about, "I wouldn't call it an… 'edgy phase' as you say. More of a... ‘countercurrent’ phase. Isn't it what teenagehood is all about?"

"What about the woman?" Jimmy asked, without an ounce of finesse.

"The woman?"

"Near the oddities. She has been a huge influence, hasn't she? So was she... a friend? Or... a good friend?"

"Nothing of that sort. That would be my adoptive mother."

Beverly, Jimmy and Brian stayed perfectly silent.

They didn't make a single sound, didn't dare a mere breath.

Even Jimmy managed to keep his expressive face in check.

They looked straight at Lecter, erasing with a skill they didn't know they had any possible reaction they could have.

"Nice," only said Brian, before clearing his throat.

Beverly bit her lips to prevent herself from stating that they seemed to be very close. She remained silent, her jaws tightened to prevent any word from getting out, leaving Brian alone to carry on with the conversation without revealing the only thought the three of them were sharing at that moment.

"And did she was supportive of your choice of career?" he conversationally asked in a higher voice than usual, betraying how hard he was trying to change the subject.

"You mean to become a Doctor? What could she have wanted me to become, if not?"

"Yeah... Good point... Doctor's pretty cool. Most parents wouldn't mind."

Knowing that it was time for her to jump in if she didn't want to cringe at the thought of that moment of awkwardness for the rest of her life, she brought the conversation toward a topic far less absurd.

"I'm very interested in your Baltimore phase, Doctor," she said. "The street scenes. Where does it come from? There's nothing like it before."

"I was in a new environment. It called for new objects of attention."

"Baltimore was the new environment?" Brian asked.

"Yes, I did not grow up here."

That sentence, said with that accent, sounded somewhat redundant.

"Why those objects of attention?" Beverly asked.

"That was what was before my eyes for a couple of years."

"Doesn't seem like the kind of places you find around John Hopkins."

"I studied at this university. I did not live there."

"You lived where you drew these scenes?" she frowned, all her thoughts now focused on the current topic, the weird mention of the mother completely forgotten.

"That surprises you, Miss Katz," he noticed with a smile.

"It's simply not the kind of area where you live now, is it?"

She had obviously never been to Lecter's house but his suit, his watch and his cufflinks were telling on their own.

"Indeed. But I did not always live where I live today. I arrived in this country without money and without rights. It took me some years to build up what I now have though I wouldn't talk of meritocracy, considering my upbringing. That being said, I still have seen glimpses of the world outside my current neighborhood."

Beverly simply couldn't reconcile the idea of the man before her with the one behind the scenes she had seen drawn. Like two different pictures superimposed by force, it just created a mess that Beverly couldn't make sense of. There were so many questions she had. Why and how were on the top of that list. Yet, she felt it was profoundly misplaced and rude to question someone who were not even her friend about a part of their life now bygone. It was simply her morbid curiosity, and it had no place in Lecter's past hardship.

At least according to her.

Not according to Brian, though.

"Your adoptive mother didn't help you out?"

It was obvious, according to his pinched tone, that he was still not over that mother thing.

"She wasn't my adoptive mother anymore, at that point."

That efficiently shut Brian up on this topic and any other.

Doctor Hannibal Lecter had said that this exhibition was a stroll into the depths of an artist's soul.

Beverly didn't know if it was true for every exhibition. Or just for this one. The natural history of the illustrator. In any case, as she was driving her two friends back to Virginia, she couldn’t rid herself of the persistent feeling that she had caught glimpses of Lecter she wasn't supposed to see.

"It was weird, uh?" Brian suddenly said, his eyes lost on the road ahead.

So, she wasn't alone in thinking so.

"I know right?" Jimmy nodded. "Talk about one nasty Oedipus complex!"

"I'm not sure he meant it that way."

"Whether or not he meant it that way, which seventeen years old draws his step-mom naked?"

"The kind who has a good-looking step-mom? Depending on how old he was when they met, it's awkward but not necessarily that fucked up."

"Either way, if he wanna talk about his mommy issues, I'm here for him."

"Pretty sure he knows some good shrinks..."

Beverly didn't join Jimmy and Brian's conversation. There was something else in the layout of that exhibition that bothered her, something else than teenage fantasy. There were other parts of it that she still couldn't quite get out of her mind.

The first of which was that chubby baby hand scratching the floor. Hidden among the History of nature and its detached scene. Like a cosmic secret behind the fabric of the universe.

She hadn't even thought of mentioning it to Lecter. It would have felt obscene to question him and Beverly knew the mostly quiet man wouldn't have answered anyway. Still, she couldn't get that specific picture out of her mind.

"What happened to the parents, though?" Jimmy wondered.

"What do you mean?"

"The two folks in the first drawings. They were everywhere. Then we never saw them again."

Beverly considered the question for an instant. Jimmy was right. The smiling, loving faces that would take the color of the seasons and stay by each other’s side through all of them, they were nowhere to be seen in the darker pieces of teenagehood.

"Well," Brian tried after a second of reflection, "he did say he had an adoptive mother, so..."

"You think the dad remarried?"

"Probably. But considering how he is completely out of the picture after that, I don't think Lecter took it so well."

"My parents divorced," Jimmy told them. "Best thing they ever did for each other. And my twin and I got to have twice the birthdays."

"I'm not sure it was that kind of ambiance, at the Lecters'," Beverly said, her eyes on the road.

The disappearance of the figures was too sudden, the change of style was too extreme. Whatever had taken the parents out of Lecter's drawings had also taken the colors.

"You think he may want to draw me one day?" Jimmy asked. "I've been told I'm very drawable."

"Who told you that, apart from your mother?"

"My mother's opinion is not to be dismissed."

"I don't think Lecter would find your face interesting enough."

"He drew a dead trout..."

"I'm pretty sure it was a charr."

"No, it was a trout. I know my Salmonidae."

Beverly let the two men at their new bickering.

She, on the other hand, didn't have many light thoughts in her mind. That exhibition had been disturbing in a quiet, subtle way that Beverly couldn't pinpoint. Maybe it was simply art. She couldn't remember what asshole had said that art was supposed to be unsettling.

If so, then Lecter was a freaking good artist.

"You didn't invite me."

It was late, even for Will and Hannibal's standards.

Both men were quite used to talking well into the night, forgetting the supposedly strict frame of professional relationship to let their therapy session blur into their private life.

Not that Hannibal minded.

He was very careful not to remind Will of the time, going as far as to put the landline phone in the drawer of his desk so that its small screen wouldn’t shine with the knowledge of the hour.

Will had a watch of course, but he always seemed to forget it, to Hannibal's greatest pride.

This night, their session had ended nearly two hours ago, and Will hadn't shown a sign of realization. He was detailing the art on the wall with the same fascinated curiosity that Hannibal currently had while detailing Will.

"Alana told me about it yesterday," Will said. "I'd have been interested in going."

"To my defense, I didn't invite anyone."

"Shyness or low self-esteem?" Will asked through his tone betrayed that he didn't believe in any of those two possibilities.

"My art is for me a constant source of pride," Hannibal informed. "Though I did not choose to make it my career like many people around me, I am always happy to sing for my friends or to expose when appropriate, to small and large audiences."

The large audiences were however much more familiar with his most gruesome, anonymous human oeuvres.

"Then why?"

"Because I didn't believe that it was the kind of event you would enjoy. And I didn't want to force you into the difficult position of having to refuse me anything."

"I generally don't have a problem refusing stuff."

Will turned around, leaning against the drawer chest, his eyes now on Hannibal. For anyone else, the Doctor would have been displeased. A drawer was not a piece of furniture made to be sat on, and it was old, fragile wood that made its pristine surface. Hours of craftsmanship could be ruined by a weight carelessly added where it wasn't supposed to go.

But for Will, Hannibal didn't find it in him to care. Quite the contrary. To watch the man be carefree and casual in this office, betraying a sense of safety and complicity, was a

pleasure Hannibal couldn't get enough of. For that alone, he was willing to overlook his strict policy on using furniture for its intended purposes.

"I'm not into crowds, but I could have gone any other day. Skip the opening and enjoy the art."

Hannibal felt all his trains of thoughts speed up at the mere idea, fueled by the delicious perspective. He could already picture it. Will and he, strolling among snippets of Hannibal's mind, trying to find their way to its core. The Doctor revealing himself completely through those tokens of his aesthetic, and Will *enjoying* it.

Will, delighted, loving each of those pieces and finding in them an echo of his own self.

Hannibal could picture the scene in vivid colors in his mind. The kind of other-wordly colors that had haunted his earliest period.

But he knew it was not possible. Not yet.

Will wasn't ready.

The empathetic profiler hadn't grown the senses necessary to the appreciation of Hannibal's art. If he were to see it today, Will would simply be too clever for his own good, and not enough to save himself. He would certainly see the shadow, the shape of an entity projected on a grey floor, and not see the beauty of the entity itself. He would see that gigantic black mass and flee in fright, forever blind to its true source.

No. If Hannibal wanted to one day appreciate art side by side with Will, he needed to be patient and precise. To hold back his expectations and hopes to focus solely on the path to achieve them.

"It is but anatomy," he said. "But if you want to appreciate my art, please, come over one night for dinner and I will show you my favorite pieces. More worthy of your time than what you may see in a crowded exhibition."

A selection of censored depictions, good for young, easily worried minds. They would have to do for now. Hannibal's bolder work had to wait.

Will simply nodded, as invitations for dinner were now something nearly casual for them. He then got on his feet and slowly walked to the other side of the room. Instinctively,

Hannibal stepped forward to have a look at the drawer chest. It was still as impeccable as it had been before Will. Which nearly disappointed Hannibal. He wouldn't have minded Will leaving the trail of his chaos in this office. In addition to the one he was already leaving in every remote corner of Hannibal's mental palace.

"Did they like it?"

"Who?"

"The friends that came to see it. The ones I know, at least."

"I think my art brought Alana back to her worst years of med school. She confessed to me dreaming of having to retake all her exams, the night after the opening."

Will smiled at the thought.

"You must have been hated, back when you were a teacher," he said.

"Do your students hate you when they are tested on one of your articles?"

"They execrate the mere idea of my existence."

"Fair of them. We make them miserable; it is but just to hate what hurts us. I guess some of my students hated me. But most of them still ached for my mentorship or even my preface on their works. They were good at hiding their resentment."

"You'd believe future FBI agents are good liars. You'd be surprised."

"Or maybe you are simply better at seeing through them than I was."

"Maybe..."

Will was now detailing a row of books neatly ordered on a shelf. They were mostly about photography, and Will, considering the time he had spent observing them, couldn't be far from knowing them by heart by now. Yet, he kept coming back to them, more likely as a way to busy his eyes.

"Jack was appreciative, I believe," Hannibal continued. "Mostly of my later work. As for Misters Zeller and Price, and Miss Katz, they..."

"Wait, they were invited?" Will interrupted.

"As I said, no one was invited. They mostly invited themselves."

Will was once again facing Hannibal, this time truly amused, and Hannibal instinctively mirrored his smile.

"What did they think of it?"

"Hard to tell. They mostly questioned me. I do believe they had created a mental image of me that is not quite accurate, and that image met at odds with what they have seen. I also believe they somehow managed to update their opinion with an even less accurate mental image."

Will laughed at that, apparently having no problem picturing it in his head.

"I think they had an agenda," he said.

"What agenda?"

Will suddenly hesitated and finally shrugged.

"Forget it."

Hannibal was about sure it had to do with Jimmy Price's fastened heartbeat each time they were meeting eyes. Will was obviously trying to be a decent colleague by keeping some matters unaddressed. Hannibal approved of that behavior. It was the respectful thing to do.

"What did they see?" Will asked.

"Mmh?"

"That didn't match what they thought of you."

"I believe they misunderstood some repetitive attentions I had for one of my subjects, and deemed them to be misplaced when they were actually sanely and reasonably rooted. I can't hold it against them. Appearances are deceptive, more so in visual arts than anywhere else."

"I have no idea what you're talking about."

"They would have one."

"They actually told you it was misplaced?"

"No. However, I can sometimes read through silences. Theirs was telling."

And if anything had to be misplaced, it was their quiet judgment. Lady Murasaki was a beautiful woman and art ached for such a perfect muse. Hannibal's feelings for her had nothing to do with anything. If today he had grown out of the pristine aesthetic to enjoy some more twisted and distressing expressions of beauty, he didn't regret a single drawing he had made of his ephemeral mother. No matter the sorrow and the fear that had done them part, Hannibal still cherished the perfect memory of her holy beauty.

"They also had quite the assumptions about my life before them."

"Let me guess, they thought it was all sunshine and money?"

"Your tone is mocking. That is not what you think?"

Will detailed Hannibal for less than a second.

"Nah," he shrugged, "you struggled."

"Did I now?"

"Well you said yourself you're an orphan. You're not living in the country where you've grown up and you didn't grow up in the country of your accent. There's not a single picture in any of the rooms of your house I visited, and that one day where I ate on the underplate instead of the plate itself you looked at me like I had just spit on your face. There's some stuff behind that. But, hey, I'm not your shrink. I don't care."

Hannibal had to force his smile away from his lips. Will had observed. And he had wondered. What a clever boy.

Though none of what he had mentioned was coming from a place of struggle - Hannibal himself wouldn't say he had struggled in his life, or if so, so very briefly it was negligible - it still meant that Will had looked at him with a curious mind and a desire to learn. Hannibal couldn't wait to be able to teach.

In some distant, twisted ways, ways Hannibal himself didn't dare to dwell on, Will reminded him of Mischa. The Doctor had for him the same eagerness he had had while watching his sister awaken to the world.

But Hannibal didn't wish to think too much about it. Though he was at peace with Mischa and her fate, Will Graham was promising to deal new wounds and he needed to be kept away from old forgotten scars.

"Why did you choose biological illustrations?" Will asked, finally joining his armchair to sit down.

Hannibal followed the motion with his eyes and appreciated it from afar for two reasons. First, armchairs were *made* to be sat in. And second, that meant Will was not about to leave anytime soon.

Hannibal joined him without delay.

"Why wouldn't I?"

"You don't do something because you have no reason to not do it. It's the other way around."

"I think it is a story of circumstances. As a boy studying frog dissection, I drew what I was seeing and a Doctor passing by to talk with my aunt noticed it and insisted I should work on that talent. He is the one who presented the drawing to my future med school in Paris, and to my future publishing agent. Biological drawings opened doors for me and it paid for a part of my rent. Along the way, I developed a specific interest and fondness for the field."

"What about it?"

"Biological illustrations are a key component of scientific research and history, and make the most of the unique human ability for arts."

"And?"

"And I simply enjoy being a positive addition to humanity, and doing my part to drive it to its highest peak. Don't you?"

Will shrugged.

"I'm doing what I can."

"And you can a terrific amount, Will. Humanity will be more than grateful."

THE END

End Notes

Here it ends.
Again, this is the work of a day and I know I could have gone more in depth, but I can't really afford it. It was ultimately very self-indulging. Hope you found it interesting or entertaining nonetheless
The Team Sassy Science is *really not* my strong suit and writing them was a challenge (that's why I added the bonus scene at the end, ^^ for reassurance as I was going back to my comfort characters).

Please, let me know what you thought of it, if you thought anything!
I hope I'll be able to get back to that trope at some point, it's always such a blast to invent these stories.

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!